

# Montana Drought Status October 2011



<http://drought.mt.gov>

## Map Key

Continental Divide

Drought Impact Type

## Drought Status

### October 2011

- Moist
- No Drought
- Slightly Dry
- Moderately Dry (Drought Alert)
- Severely Dry
- Extremely Dry (Severe Drought)

## Drought Impact Types -

- A = Agricultural - Soil Moisture, Range conditions
- H = Hydrological - Water Supplies, Streamflow, Groundwater

**Drought Alert** - Governor's Drought Advisory Committee strongly encourages local officials to convene local drought committees.

**Severe Drought** - Local officials should have local drought planning efforts underway or should reconvene the local drought committee at the earliest opportunity. For recommended responses, see the Montana Drought Plan



## Montana Drought Status by County - October 2011



## Montana County Drought Status Climate Summary

According to the National Weather Service (NWS) Weather / Precipitation Summary for August 2011, "Very warm and dry conditions prevailed throughout August, until the last day. Temperatures across the state averaged about 1.5 F degrees. This was the 29th warmest August, and was the warmest since 2003." Precipitation averaged below normal in August with widely-scattered pockets of above average rainfall the report notes.

The September 1, 2011 NRCS Surface Water Supply Index indicated that over 30 of 52 river basins remain in its Extremely Wet category, down from nearly 50 as of August 1. The remaining basins were split nearly evenly between the Moderately and Slightly Wet categories, indicating the warm temperatures and below average precipitation seen over parts of the state over the past 40 days.

According to the Agricultural Statistics September 19 Crop-Weather Report topsoil was rated 20 percent adequate, 53 percent short, and 27 percent very short. Subsoil moisture was rated 41 percent adequate, 45 percent short, and 13 percent very short. "Spring wheat harvest progressed to 83 percent with continued reports of drought and grasshopper damage." Winter wheat planting is at 25 percent but dry soils are delaying seeding and raising concern. Range and pasture feed conditions are 35 percent fair, 35 percent good, and 14 excellent.

According to NOAA's September 8, 2011 ENSO update, "La Nina conditions have returned and are expected to gradually strengthen and continue into the Northern Hemisphere winter 2012." La Nina episodes have a tendency to bring cooler and wetter weather to Montana from fall into early spring. La Ninas have occurred over 4 of the past 5 winters: 2007-2008; 2008-2009; 2010-2011; and now forecasted for 2011-2012. The winter of 2009-2010 saw an El Nino, ENSO's positive phase. Current Climate Prediction Center long-lead climate maps

# Montana Drought Status November 2011



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Continental Divide

Drought Impact Type

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## Montana Drought Status by County - November 2011



According to the National Weather Service Montana Weather / Precipitation Summary for October, the month saw a general westerly flow that brought above normal temperatures for the 4th consecutive month with average to much above average precipitation, especially in the central area of the state. The 3-month dry spell ended with near normal precipitation statewide for the start of the 2012 Water Year on October 1. Much of the state closed the 2011 Water Year on September 30 with precipitation well above average in the range of 2 to 6 inches and more, especially in the central, south-central, southeast and northeast divisions where it was common to see 8 inches of precipitation above normal.

Nearly two months into the new water year, NRCS Snotel is reporting a total mountain precipitation average of about 120% for the five major river basins west of the Continental Divide and 117 percent for the 11 Montana river basins east of the Divide. Currently, snow water content of the mountain snowpack west and east of the Divide averages about 110% of the 30-year average 1971-2000.

The Montana Field Office of USDA's Agricultural Statistics Service October Crop Weather Report reports that topsoil and subsoil moisture were each up from the week before at 51% adequate and surplus. Winter wheat emerged was 68% up from 54% the week before but behind the 5-year average of 81%. However, winter wheat statewide was impacted by dry conditions and cold nights leaving only 28% rated at good to excellent.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center November 30 ENSO Update reported the ongoing La Nina Advisory as, "La Nina is expected to continue through the Northern Hemisphere winter 2011-2012." Current conditions and past ENSO records indicate a "weak-to-moderate strength



# Montana Drought Status December 2011



<http://drought.mt.gov>

## Map Key

WWW Continental Divide

Drought Impact Type

## Drought Status

### December 2011

- Moist
- No Drought
- Slightly Dry
- Moderately Dry (Drought Alert)
- Severely Dry (Severe Drought)
- Extremely Dry (Severe Drought)

## Drought Impact Types -

- A = Agricultural - Soil Moisture, Range conditions
- H = Hydrological - Water Supplies, Streamflow, Groundwater

## Drought Alert - Governor's Drought

Advisory Committee strongly encourages local officials to convene local drought committees.

## Severe Drought - Local officials

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<http://nris.mt.gov/drought/>

## Montana Drought Status by County - December 2011



Montana County Drought Status Climate Summary

According to the National Weather Service Montana Weather / Precipitation Summary for December, 2011 temperatures were above average across most of Montana for the 16th consecutive month leaving December as the 34th warmest December on record. "For the period of October through December 2011 precipitation averaged 2.62 inches statewide," very close to normal. However, snowfall was only about 50 percent of normal averaging only 5.2 inches across the state, ending the month with the 25th lowest snowfall of record. The January 4, 2012 NOAA National Snow Analysis Snow Water Equivalent map indicates that almost all of the state's prairie lands are "open" or devoid of snow cover. See: [www.noahrs.noaa.gov](http://www.noahrs.noaa.gov)

As of January 4, 2012 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Snotel network indicates snow water equivalent of the mountain snowpack for the five major Montana river basins west of the Continental Divide ranges from about 80 to 90 percent of average, and between 75 and 90 percent for the 11 river basins east of the Divide, with the exceptions of the Tongue and Lower Yellowstone basins at 134 and 101 percent. NRCS records indicate that for the period of record 1971-2000 the mountain snow accumulation period will be reaching its 50 percent point by mid-January.

The Montana Agricultural Statistics Service Crop Weather Report for December 31, 2011 reported that topsoil and subsoil moisture were at 52 and 51 percent adequate and surplus. Winter wheat condition was rated 30 percent good and excellent and wind damage was 95 percent light and none. Freeze damage was 100 percent light and none. However, snow cover was rated as 98 percent none and light with range and pasture feed condition 31 percent good to excellent and grazing 84 percent open.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) January 5 ENSO Update reported that "Collectively, the ongoing oceanic and atmospheric conditions reflect the continuation of weak to moderate La Nina." The report goes on to call for increased chance for below average temperatures over the western and north-central U.S. with above average precipitation favored across the northern tier of states. Montana tends to experience cooler, and to a lesser degree, wetter winters during La Nina events.

# Montana Drought Status January 2012



<http://drought.mt.gov>

## Map Key

Continental Divide  
Drought Impact Type

## Drought Status

### January 2012

- Moist
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## Severe Drought - Local officials

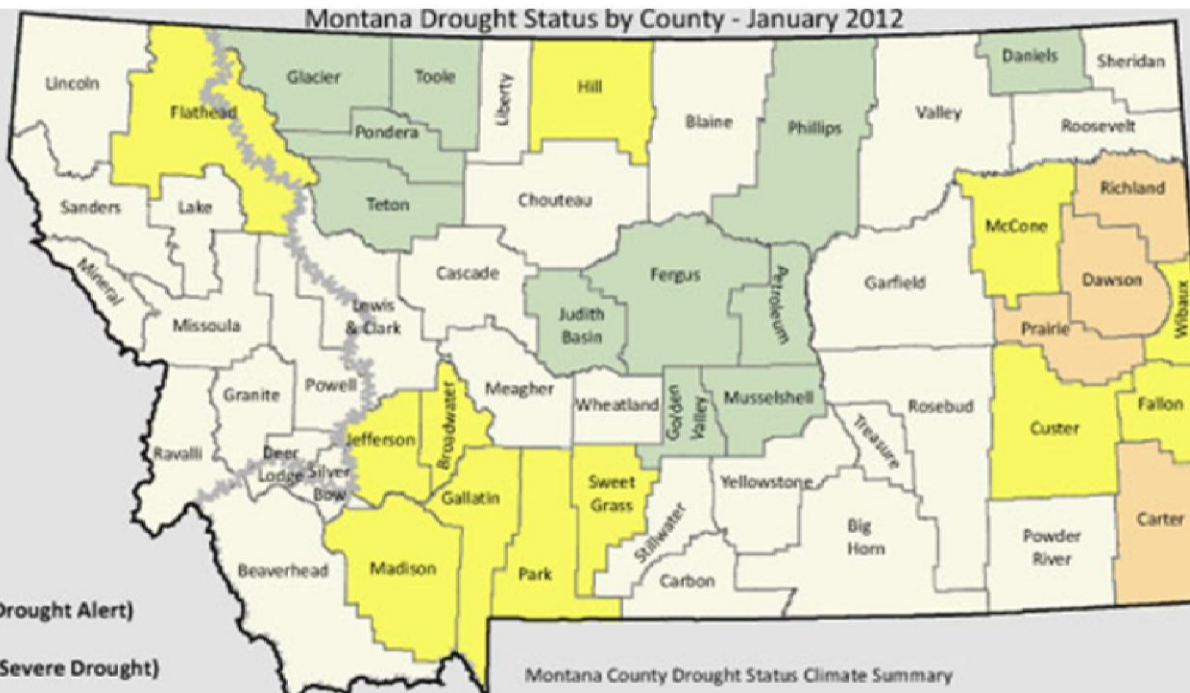
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For recommended responses, see the Montana Drought Plan



<http://dnr.mt.gov/drought/>

## Montana Drought Status by County - January 2012



According to the National Weather Service Montana Great Falls Forecast Office, provisional precipitation totals as of January 26 for the month indicate that generally the western, south-central, and central divisions are average to above average, and the north-central, northeastern, and southwest divisions range from well below to near average with exceptions. According to the Montana Climate Atlas (Caprio & Nielsen 1992) precipitation at valley elevation locations around the state ranges from around 0.50 to 1.00 inch with the exception of Kalispell where over 1.50 inches is expected. "The season of strong Chinooks is well underway as Arctic incursions increase. When Arctic incursions are more frequent, up slope wind flow causes heavy snowfall on the leeward slopes."

This occurred following a month of very little snowfall when between January 17 and 19, a storm left snowfall totals up to 30 inches in the mountains and up to a foot at valley elevations in the central area of the state. Temperatures had plunged into the single digits for much of the state but moderated into highs in the 40F range by the week of the 23rd. As of January 26, Helena was 413 percent of normal with 1.28 inches for the month or 142 percent of normal for the Water Year, October 1, 2011 to date.

According to the NRCS Snow Survey, Snotel sites in the mountains showed increases in snow water equivalent (SWE) of the snowpack of between 10- and 20-percent between January 18 and the 25th nearly statewide. The Headwaters Mainstem of the Missouri showed a SWE for its mountain snowpack of 109%; the Lower Missouri of 99%; Lower Yellowstone 99%; The Tongue 127%; Bitterroot 94%, but the Missouri headwaters only 78% following the event.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) January 5 ENSO Update reported that "Collectively, the ongoing oceanic and atmospheric conditions reflect the continuation of weak to moderate La Niña." The report goes on to call for increased chance for below average temperatures over the western and north-central U.S. with above average precipitation favored across the northern tier of states.



# Montana Drought Status February 2012



<http://drought.mt.gov>

## Map Key

Continental Divide

Drought Impact Type

## Moisture Status

February, 2012

- Extremely Moist
- Moderately Moist
- Slightly Moist
- Near Average (Normal)
- Slightly Dry
- Moderately Dry (Drought Alert)
- Extremely Dry (Severe Drought)

## Drought Impact Types -

**A** = Agricultural - Soil Moisture, Range conditions

**H** = Hydrological - Water Supplies, Streamflow, Groundwater

## Drought Alert - Governor's Drought

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## Severe Drought - Local officials

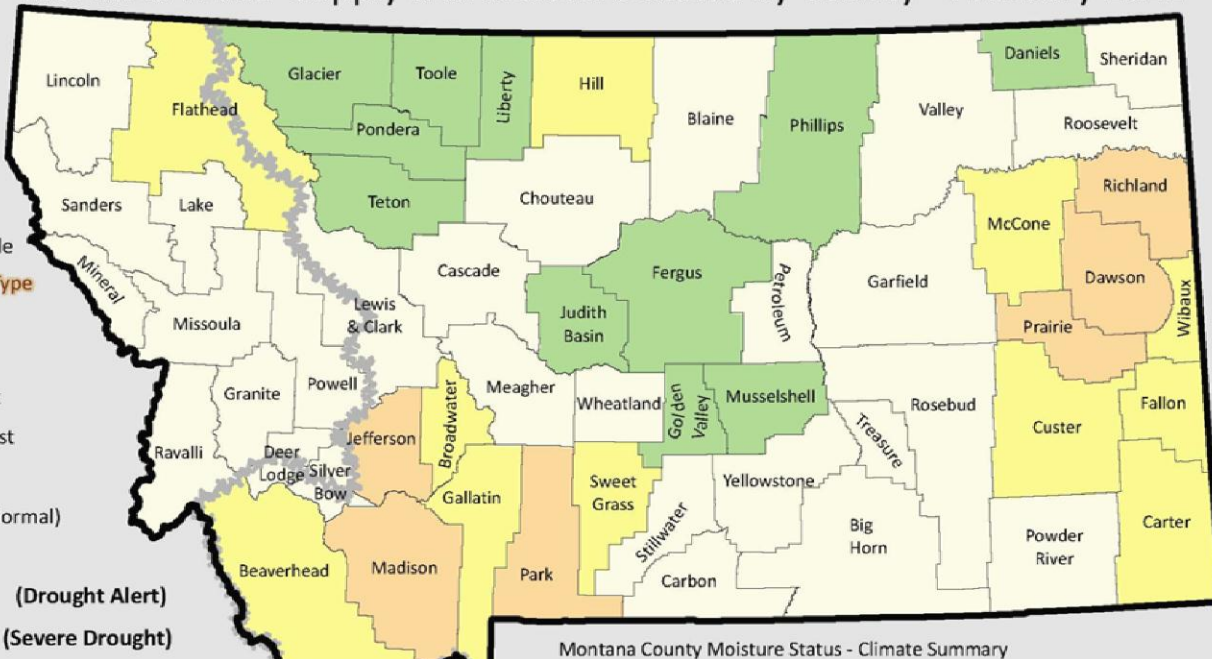
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<http://nris.mt.gov/drought/>

## Montana Water Supply and Moisture Status by County - February 2012



The USDA Crop-Weather Report for the month ending February 29, 2012 reported that temperatures ranged from below zero F. to well into the 50s across the state with the daily average low temperature in the upper 20s to 30sF generally. Ft. Benton had the warmest temperature recorded for the month at 56F. West Glacier received 2.77 inches of precipitation for the month, the most of any reporting station in the state. The Montana Climate Atlas indicates that valley elevations across the state typically receive from 0.40 to 0.70 inches for February. The Montana Water Supply and Moisture Status Map by county indicates that there are 6 counties rated as Moderately Dry with 11 counties in each the Slightly Wet and Slightly Dry categories with the remaining counties classified as Near Average.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) February 28th 8- to 14-day outlook calls for temperatures to be slightly below average and precipitation to range from slightly above to above average for the western two-thirds of the state. CPC's February 16 one-month forecast for March indicates that the western three-fourths of the state should experience equal chances for above or below temperatures and the northwest corner of the state slightly above average precipitation, with the remainder of the state equal chances for above or below precipitation.

As of February 28, the NRCS Snow, Water, and Climate Services Snotel network of mountain precipitation gauges indicated that the snow water equivalent (SWE) for the major river basins of the state ranges from 81 percent in the Gallatin to 132 percent for the Tongue River basin. The lowest SWEs are found in the headwaters of the Missouri River basin with the highest SWEs in the Lower Yellowstone River basin. The SWEs of Missouri Mainstem tributaries, which include the Sun, Teton, Marias, Smith, Musselshell, and Judith River basins range from 103- to 108 percent of the 30-year average 1971-2000.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center February 9, 2012 ENSO Update reported the ongoing La Nina Advisory as indicating a continuing "weak-to-moderate strength La Nina" over the remainder of this winter with "a return to ENSO-neutral conditions during the Northern Hemisphere spring, (March through May) which are likely to continue into the summer." Montana experiences cooler and wetter conditions during La Nina winters generally with little predictability before mid-September and out past May 1.

# Montana Drought Status

## March 2012



<http://drought.mt.gov>

### Map Key

Continental Divide

Drought Impact Type

### Moisture Status

March, 2012

- Extremely Moist
- Moderately Moist
- Slightly Moist
- Near Average (Normal)
- Slightly Dry
- Moderately Dry (Drought Alert)
- Extremely Dry (Severe Drought)

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### Severe Drought - Local officials

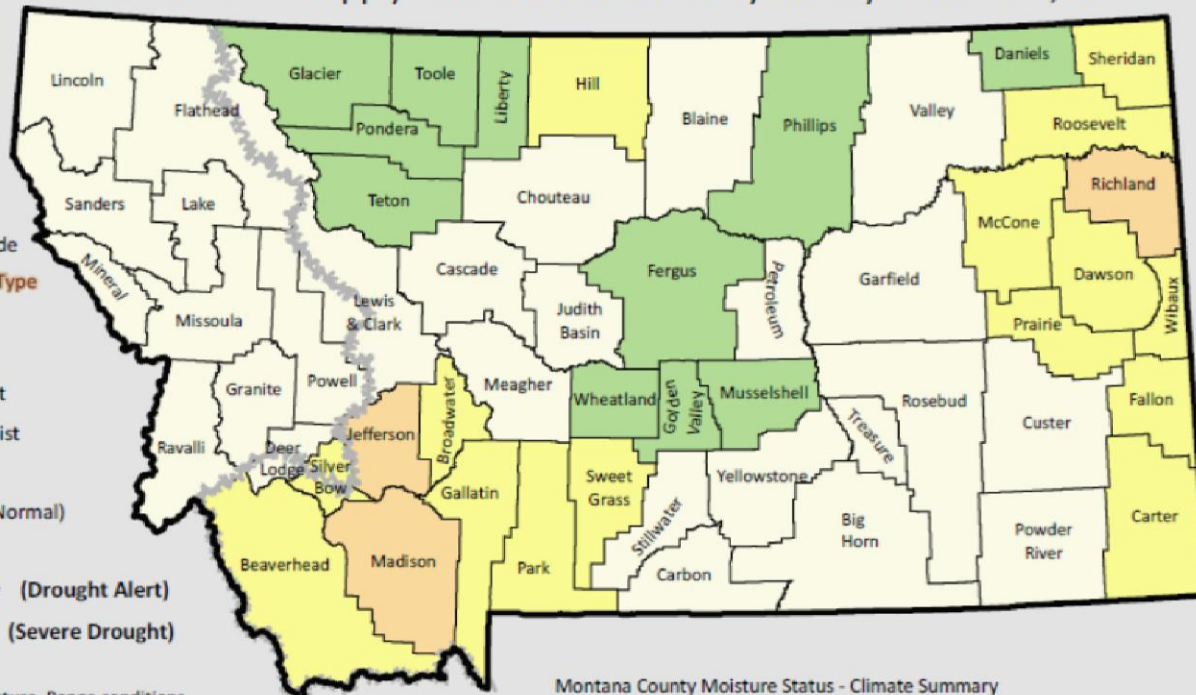
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<http://drought.mt.gov>

### Montana Water Supply and Moisture Status by County - March 14, 2012



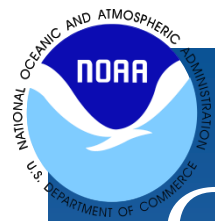
According to the National Weather Service Montana Great Falls Forecast Office, provisional precipitation totals as of January 26 for the month indicate that generally the western, south-central, and central divisions are average to above average, and the north-central, northeastern, and southwest divisions range from well below to near average with exceptions. According to the Montana Climate Atlas (Caprio & Nielsen 1992) precipitation at valley elevation locations around the state ranges from around 0.50 to 1.00 inch with the exception of Kalispell where over 1.50 inches is expected. "The season of strong Chinooks is well underway as Arctic incursions increase. When Arctic incursions are more frequent, up slope wind flow causes heavy snowfall on the leeward slopes."

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# Governor's Drought Advisory Committee

March 15, 2012

National Weather Service

Gina Loss

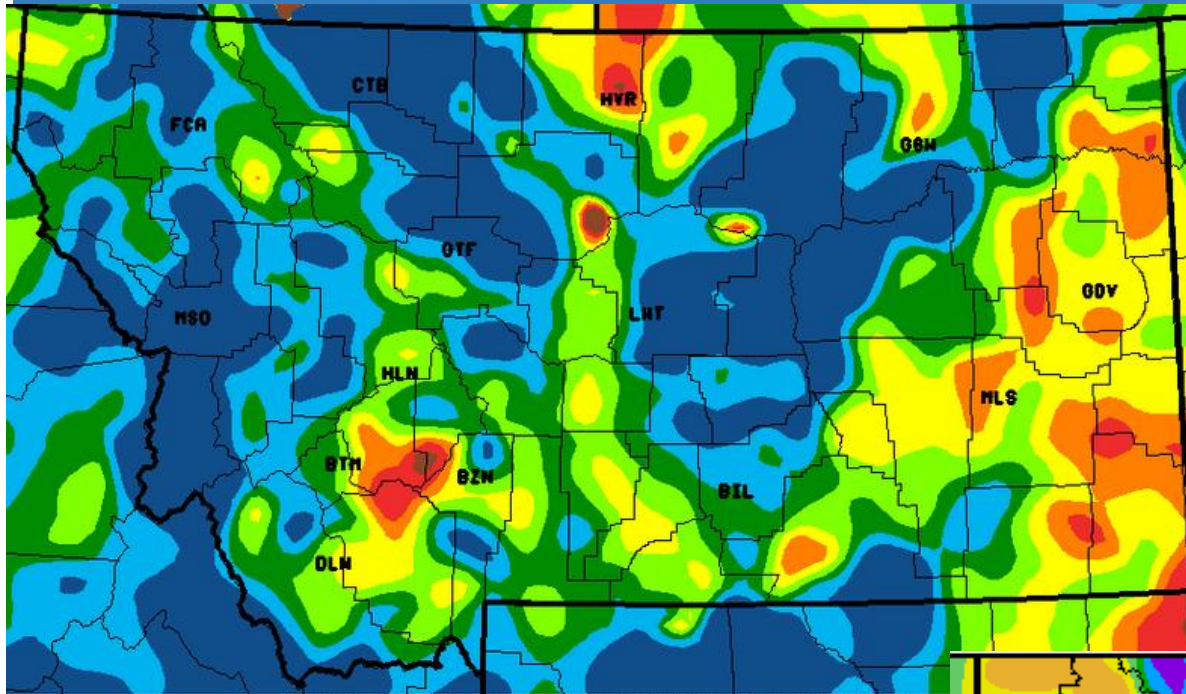


**Fire northeast of Great Falls  
March 13, 2012**



**Fire between Havre and Chinook  
March 13, 2012**

# Percent of Normal Precipitation October 2011



October 2011 Percent of Normal Precipitation  
Period of Normal: 1981-2010

20 40 60 85 115 150 200

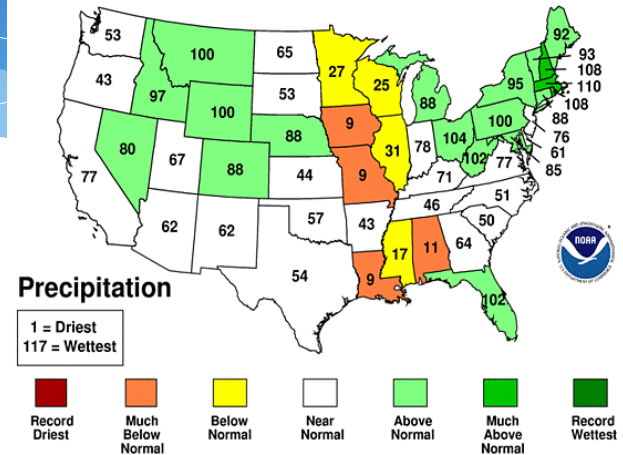
NOTE: Data used to generate this image are  
PROVISIONAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

<http://www>

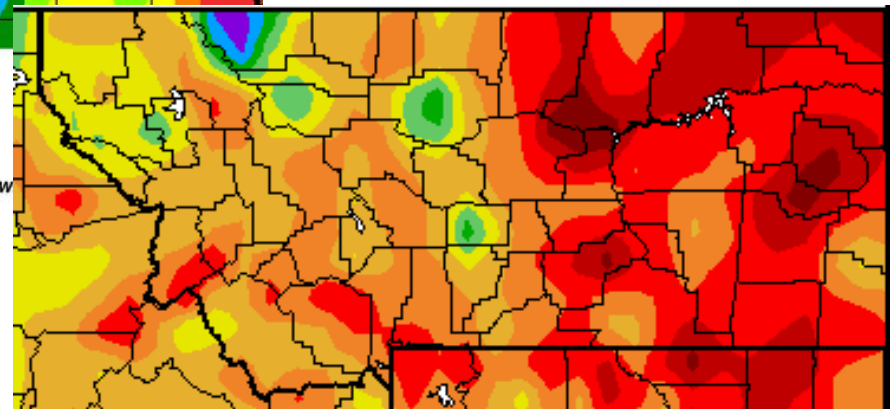
Departure from average  
temperature

## October 2011 Statewide Ranks

National Climatic Data Center/NESDIS/NOAA

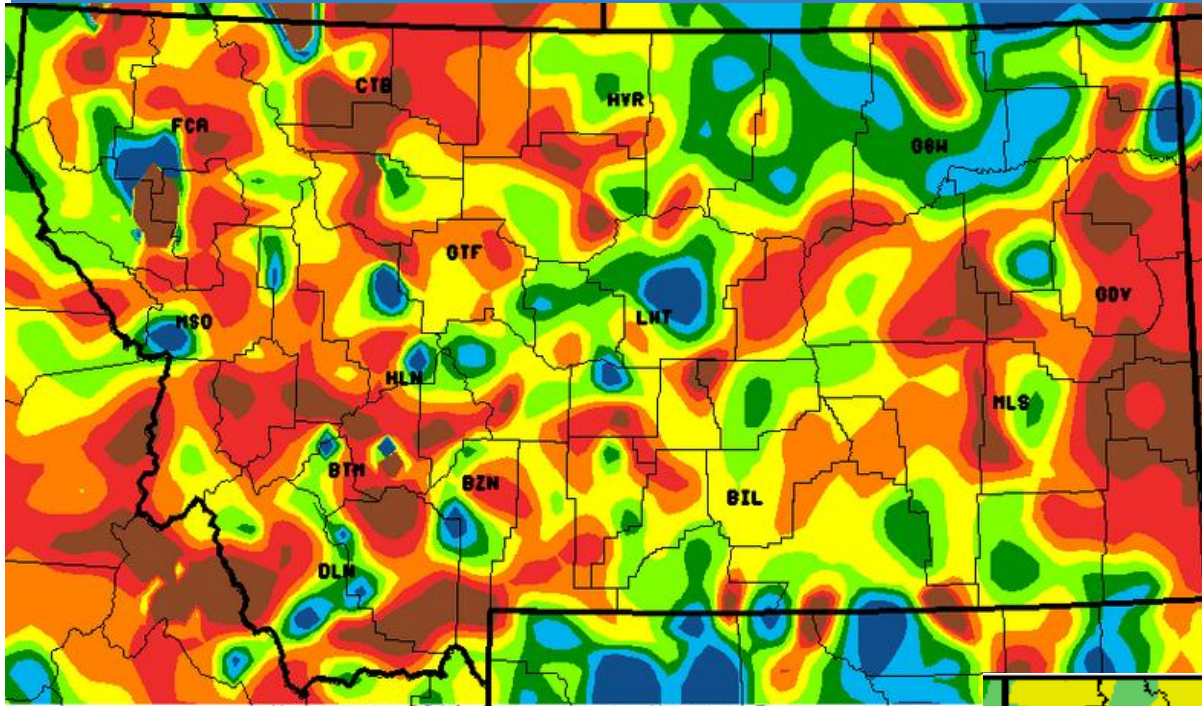


19th wettest, 100<sup>th</sup> driest





# Percent of Normal Precipitation November 2011



November 2011 Percent of Normal Precipitation  
Period of Normal: 1981-2010

20 40 60 85 115 150 200

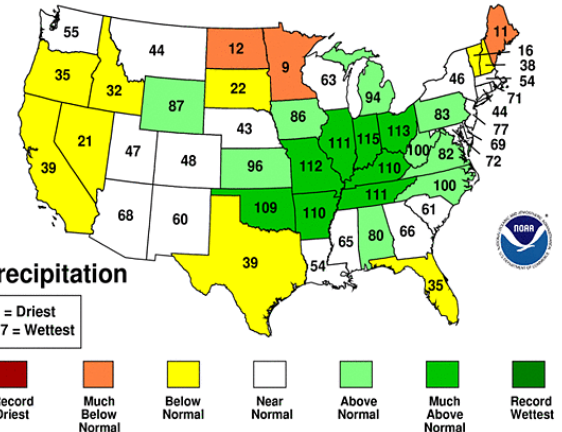
NOTE: Data used to generate this image are  
PROVISIONAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

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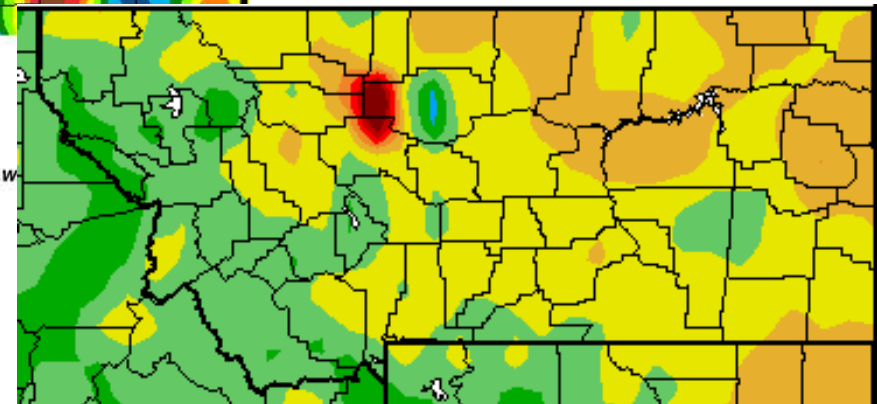
Departure from average  
temperature

## November 2011 Statewide Ranks

National Climatic Data Center/NESDIS/NOAA

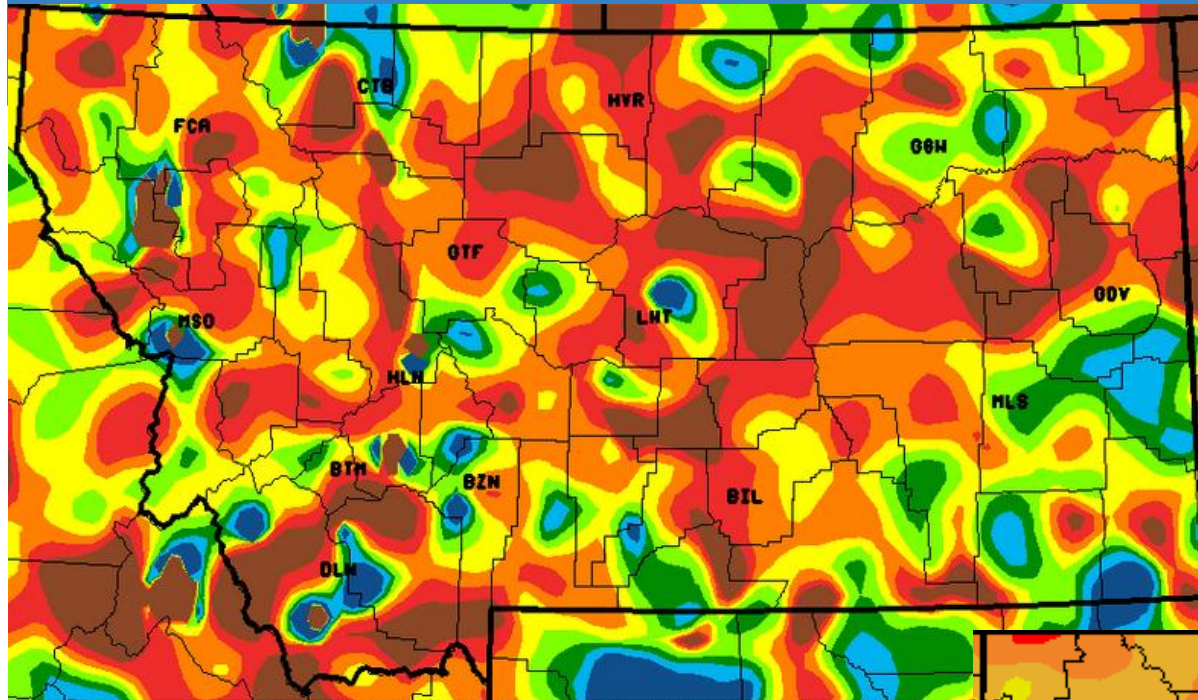


44<sup>th</sup> driest, 75<sup>th</sup> wettest



-10 -8 -6 -4 -2 0 2 4 6 8 10

# Percent of Normal Precipitation December 2011



December 2011 Percent of Normal Precipitation  
Period of Normal: 1981-2010

20 40 60 85 115 150 200

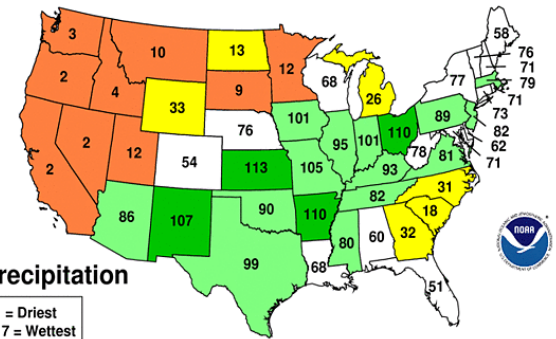
NOTE: Data used to generate this image are  
PROVISIONAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

<http://www.>

Departure from average  
temperature

## December 2011 Statewide Ranks

National Climatic Data Center/NESDIS/NOAA

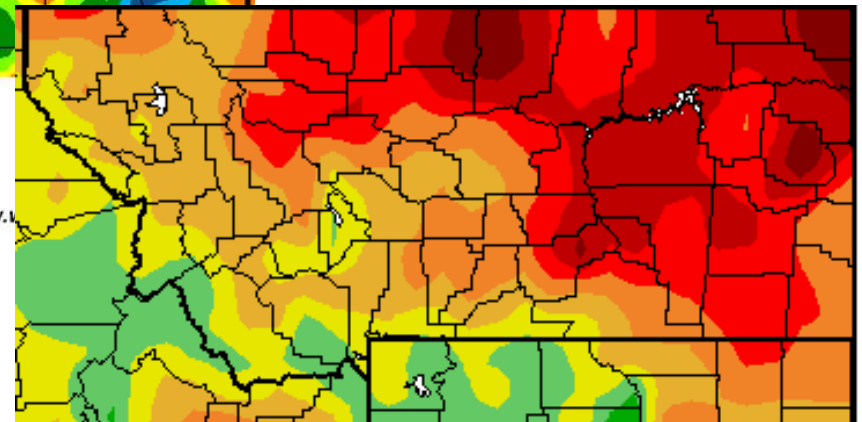


### Precipitation

1 = Driest  
117 = Wettest

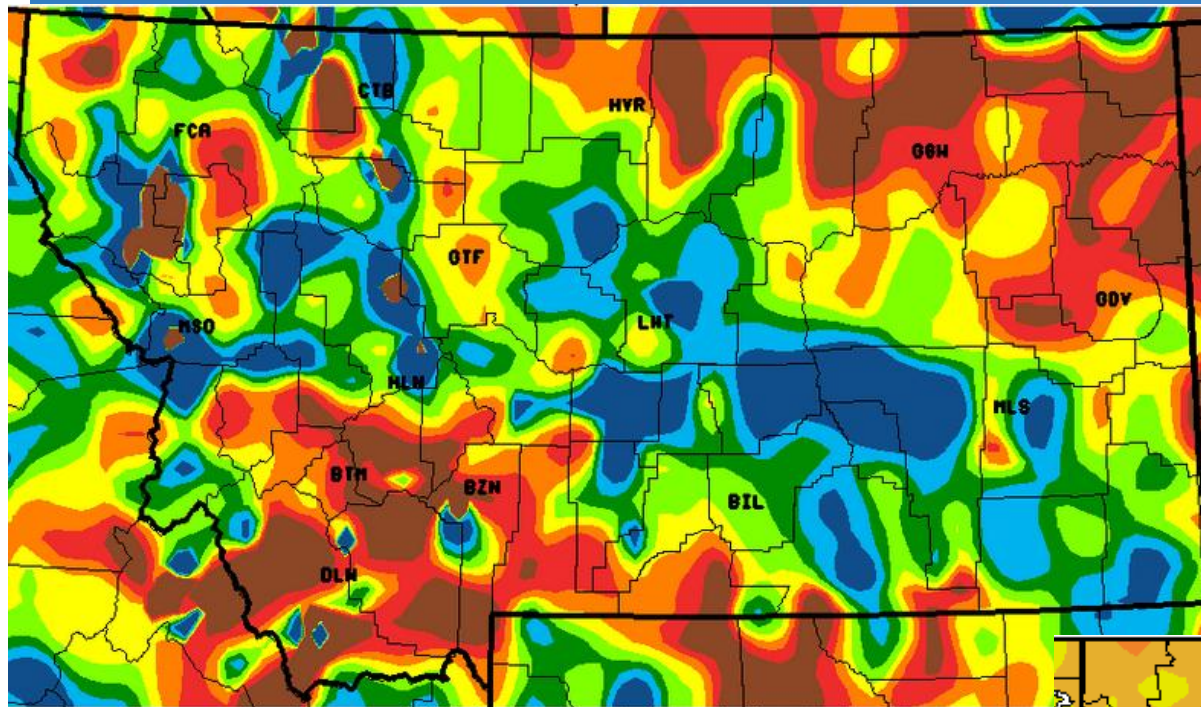


10<sup>th</sup> driest, 109<sup>th</sup> wettest





# Percent of Normal Precipitation January 2012



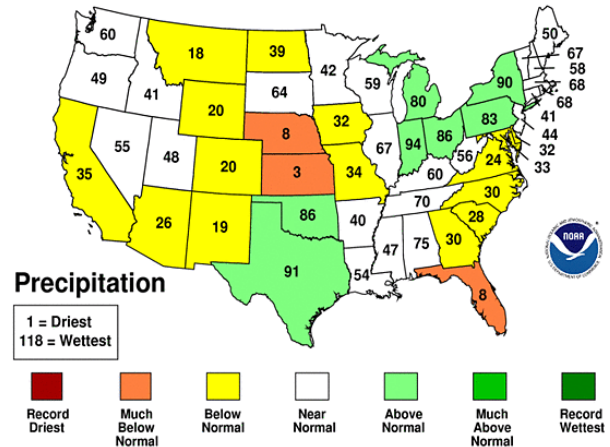
January 2012 Percent of Normal Precipitation  
Period of Normal: 1981-2010

20 40 60 85 115 150 200

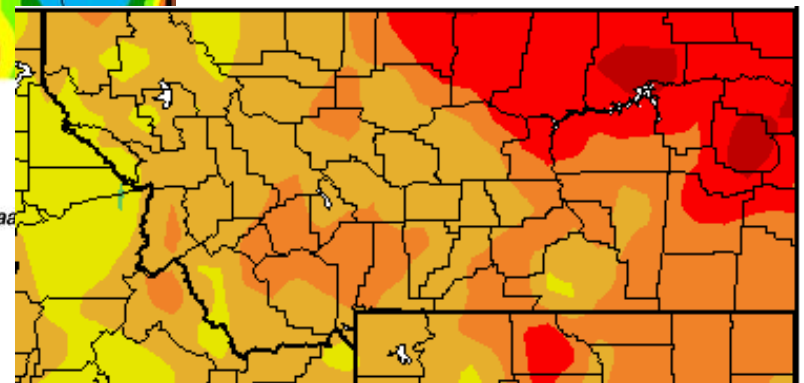
NOTE: Data used to generate this image are  
PROVISIONAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

## January 2012 Statewide Ranks

National Climatic Data Center/NESDIS/NOAA



18<sup>th</sup> driest, 101<sup>st</sup> wettest

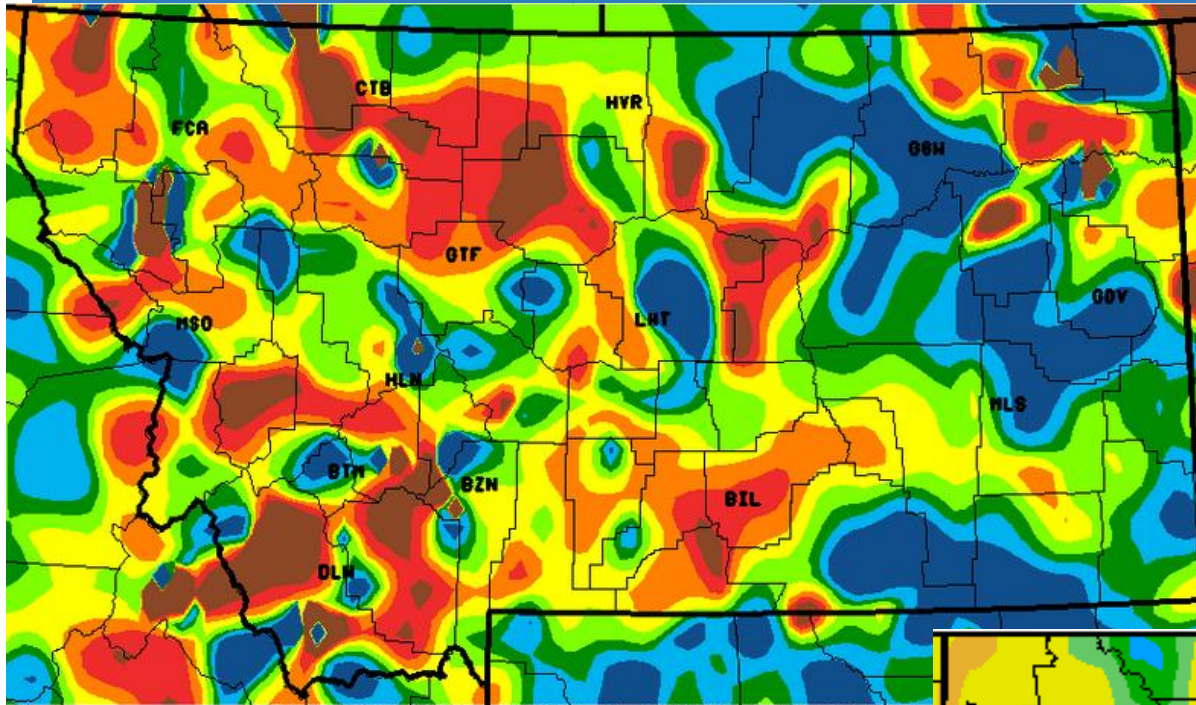


<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov>

Departure from average  
temperature



# Percent of Normal Precipitation February 2012



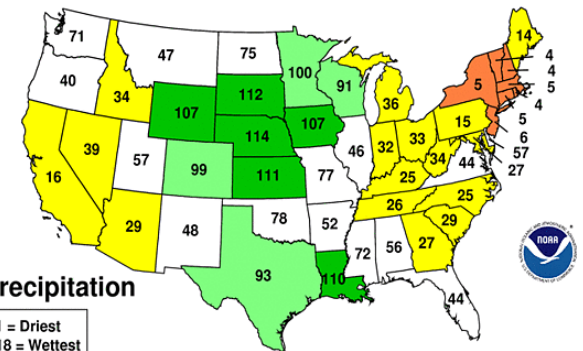
February 2012 Percent of Normal Precipitation  
Period of Normal: 1981-2010

20 40 60 85 115 150 200

NOTE: Data used to generate this image are  
PROVISIONAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

## February 2012 Statewide Ranks

National Climatic Data Center/NESDIS/NOAA

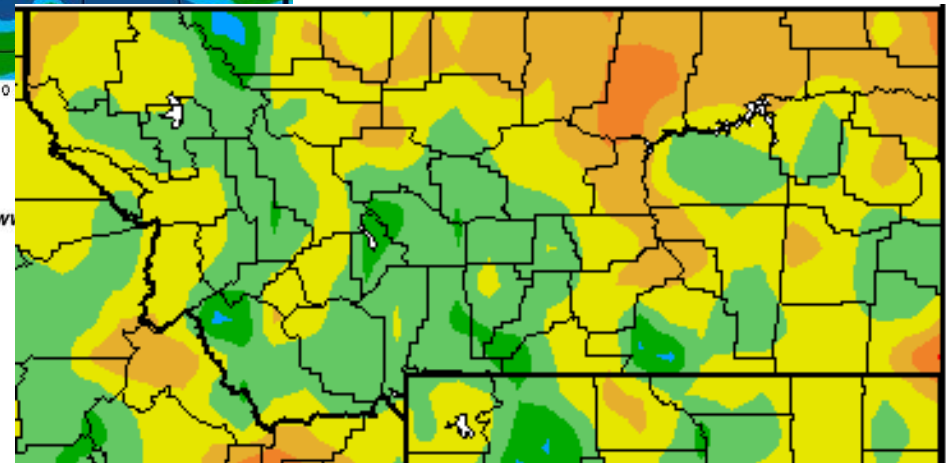


### Precipitation

1 = Driest  
118 = Wettest



47<sup>th</sup> driest, 71<sup>st</sup> wettest,



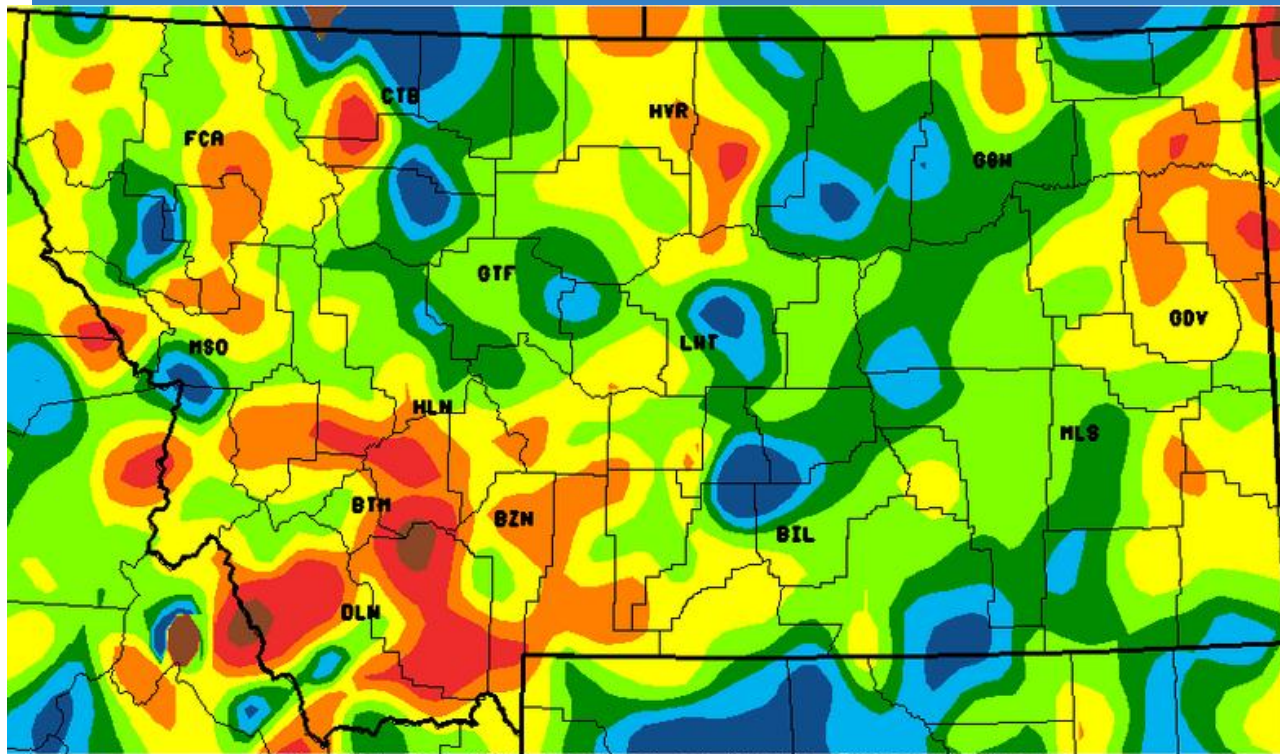
<http://www.noaa.gov>

Departure from average  
temperature





# Percent of Normal Precipitation Water Year 2012



Oct 2011-Feb 2012 Percent of Normal Precipitation

Period of Normal: 1981-2010

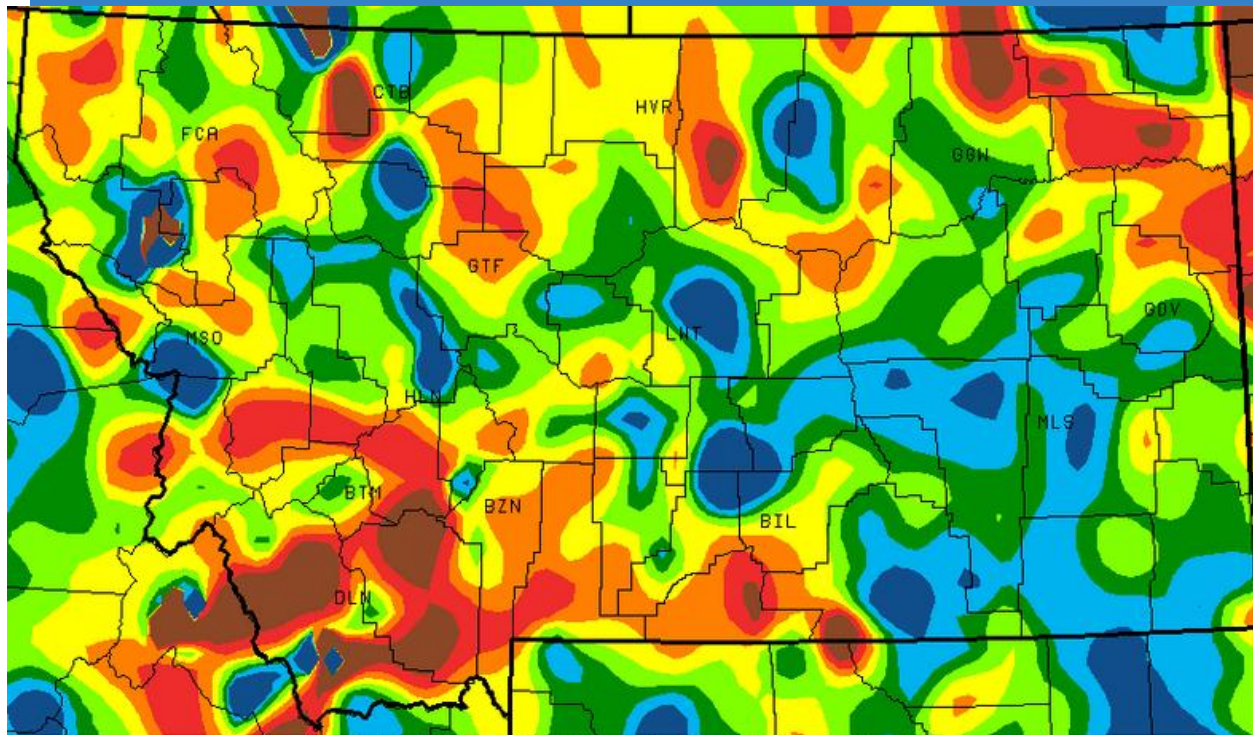
20 40 60 85 115 150 200

NOTE: Data used to generate this image are  
PROVISIONAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/Greatfalls>

- \* October – February
- \* Most of Montana averaging near to above normal
- \* Southwest and east averaging near to below normal

# Percent of Normal Precipitation Calendar Year 2012



Jan-Feb 2012 Percent of Normal Precipitation  
Period of Normal: 1981-2010

20 40 60 85 115 150 200

NOTE: Data used to generate this image are  
PROVISIONAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

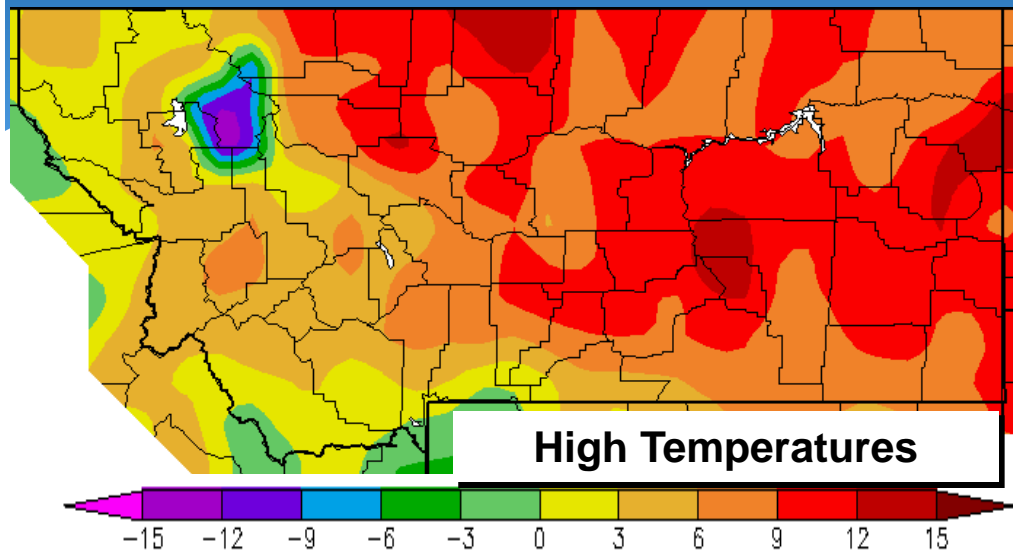
<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/Greatfalls>

- \* January – February
- \* Below to well below normal southwest and northeast
- \* Above to well above normal central and southeast

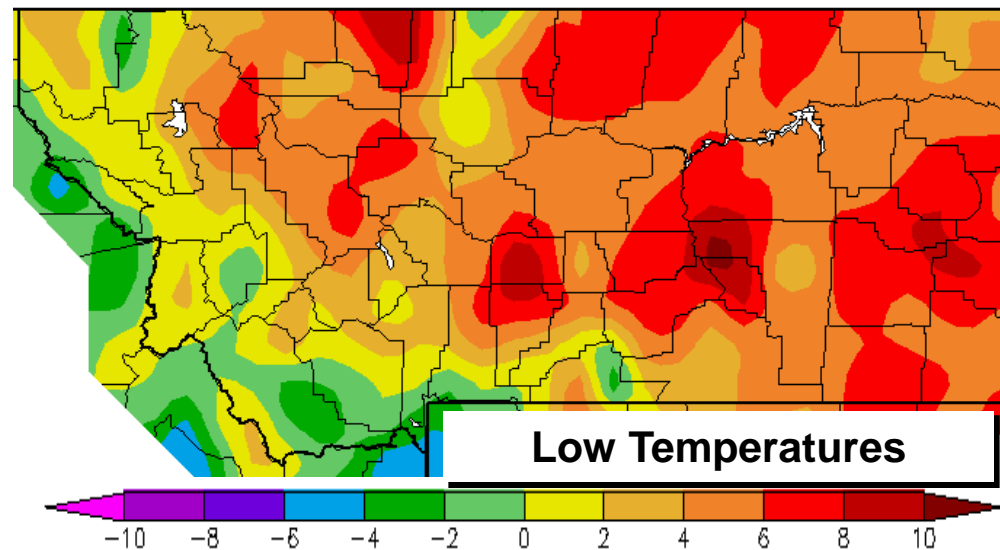


# Temperature Anomalies

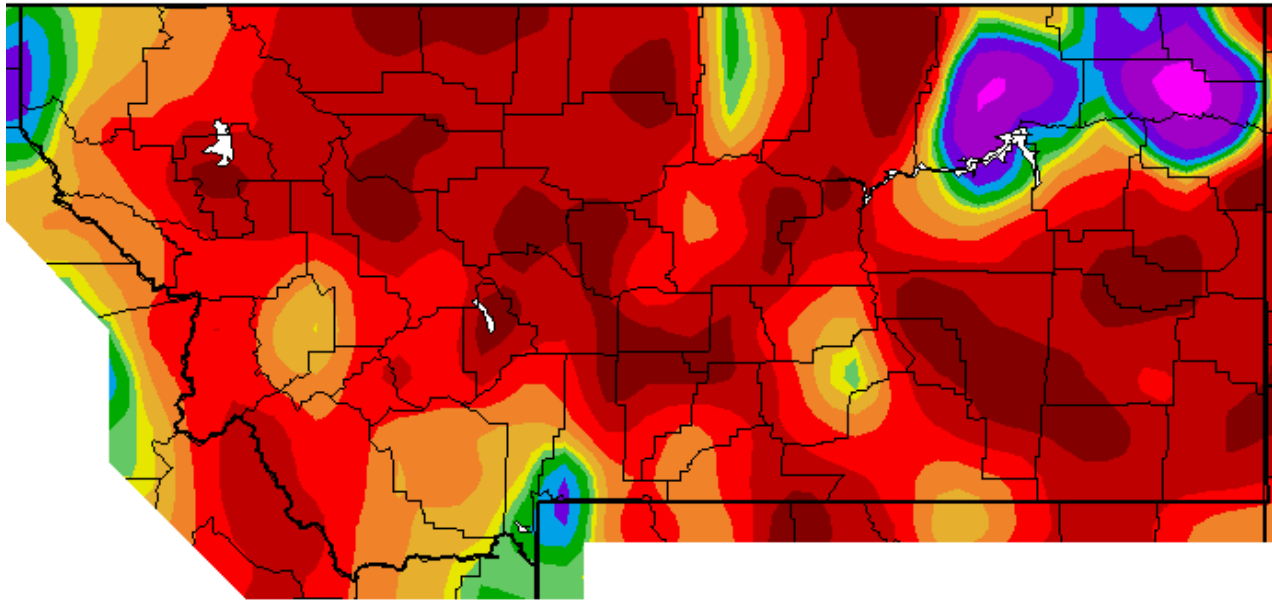
## March 1 – 12, 2012



- \* Temperatures averaging near to above normal
- \* Highs
  - \* West/southwest – 0-6 degrees above normal
  - \* Central/east – 6-15 degrees above normal
- \* Lows
  - \* West/southwest – near normal
  - \* Central/east – 2-10 degrees above normal



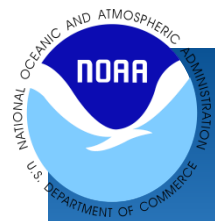
# Percent of Average Precipitation March 1 – 12



- \* Well below normal over much of Montana
- \* Near to well above normal in the northeast corner of Montana

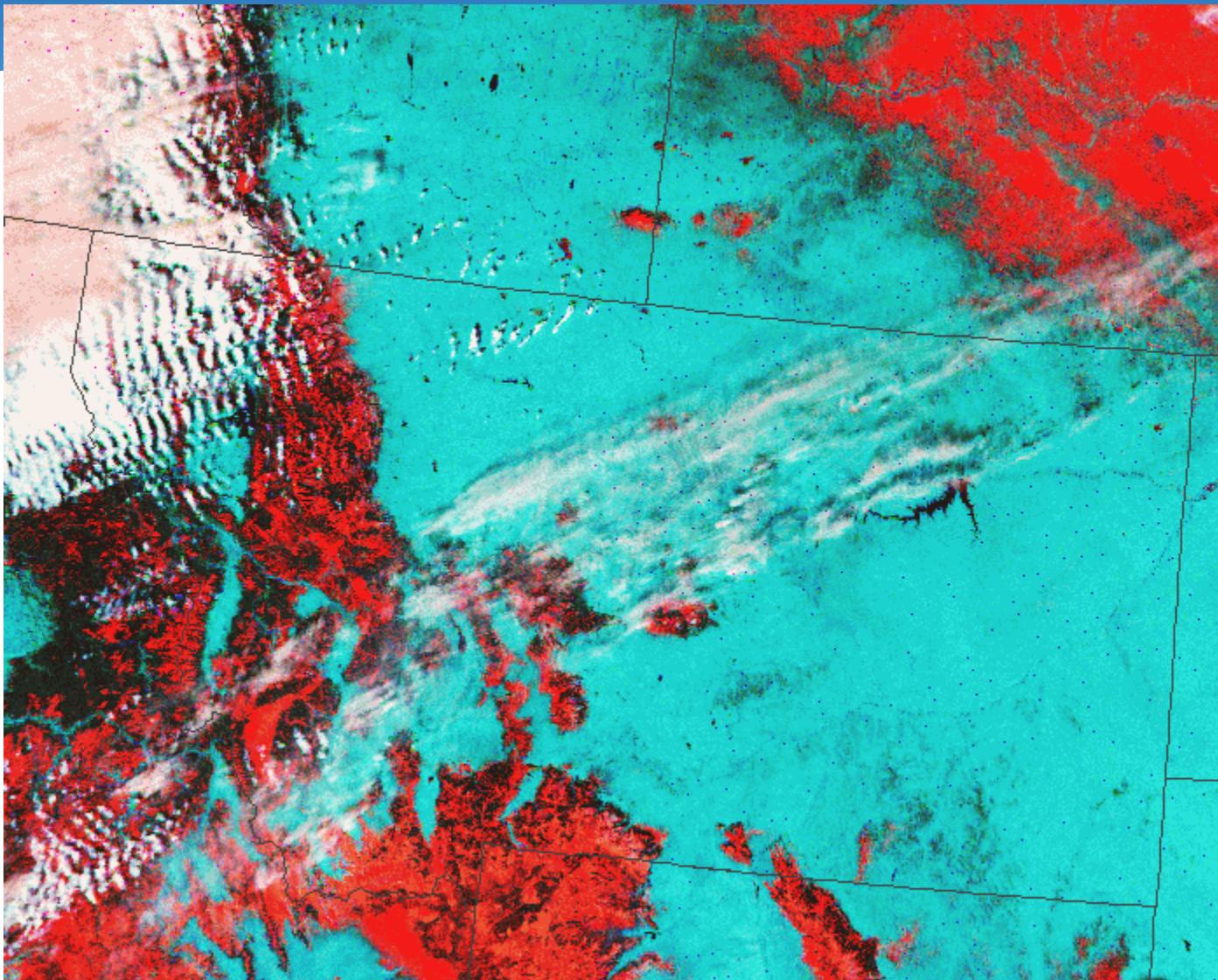




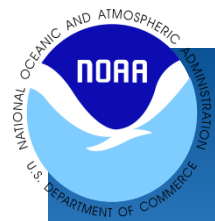


# MODIS Satellite Imagery

## March 10, 2012



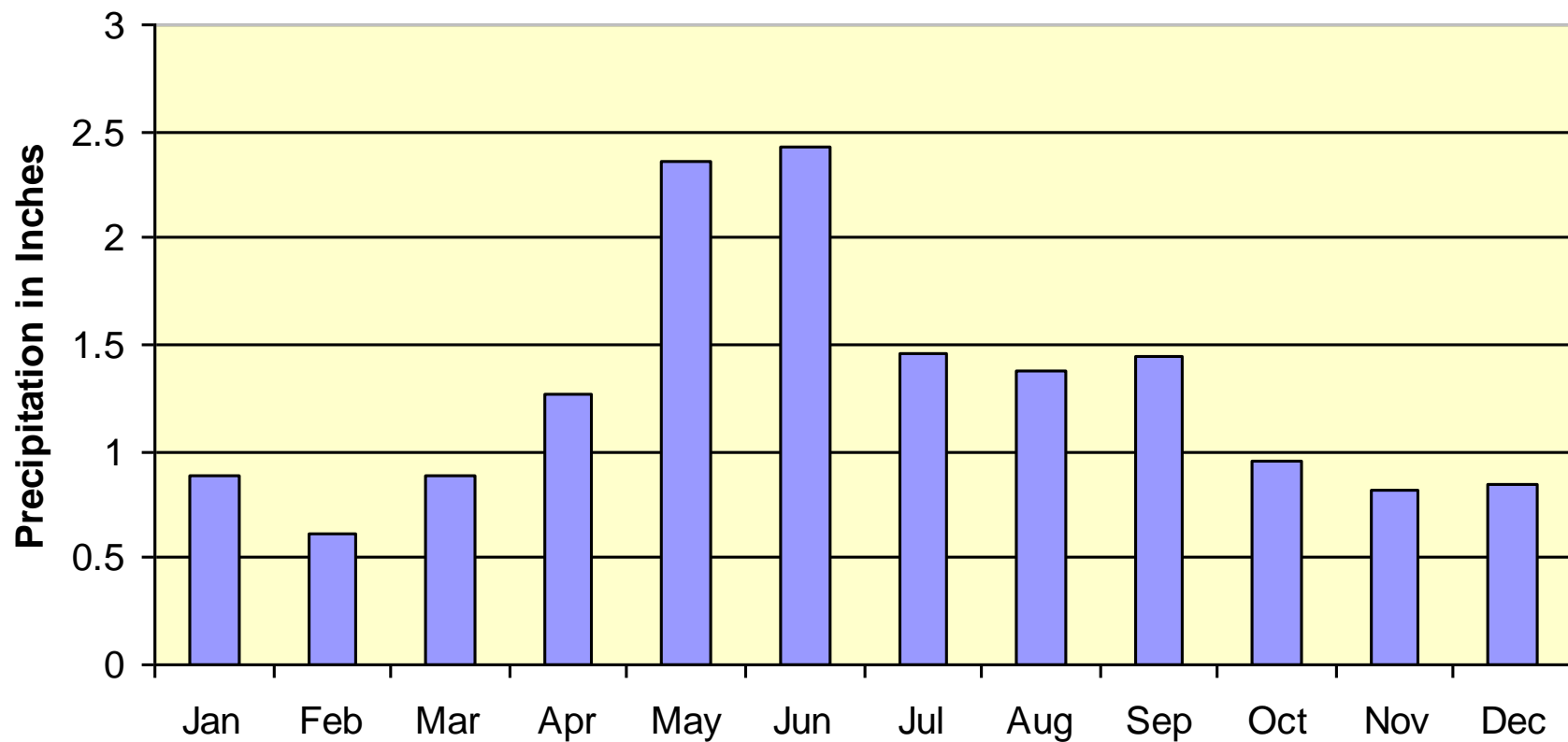
AQUA MODIS False Color 20120310 20:00 UTC



# Statewide Average Precipitation

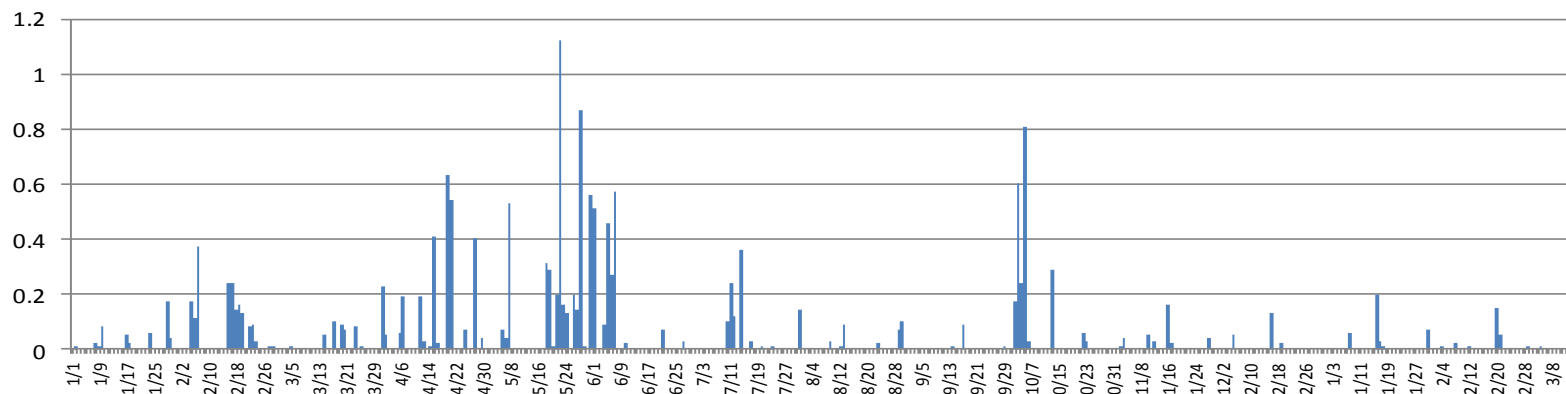
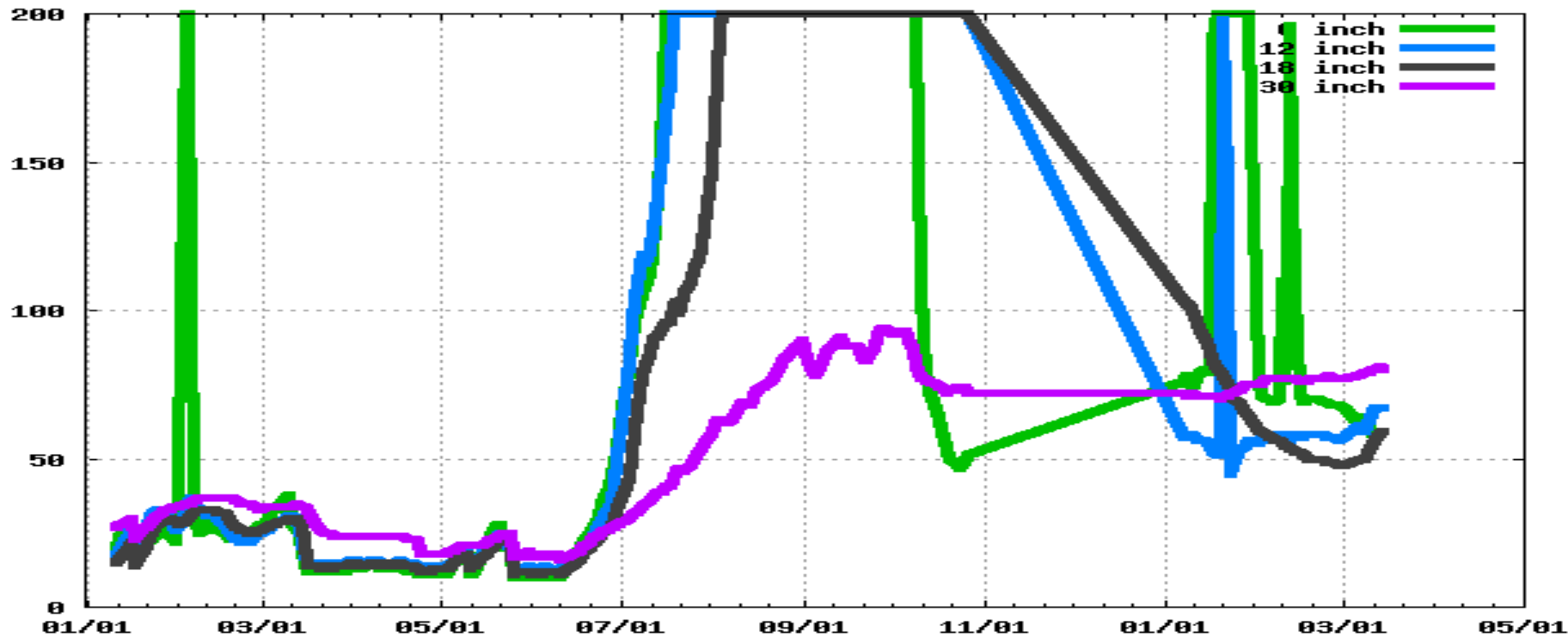
## March still on par with other winter months

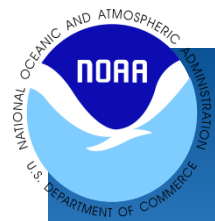
Statewide Average Precip





# Great Falls Soil Moisture





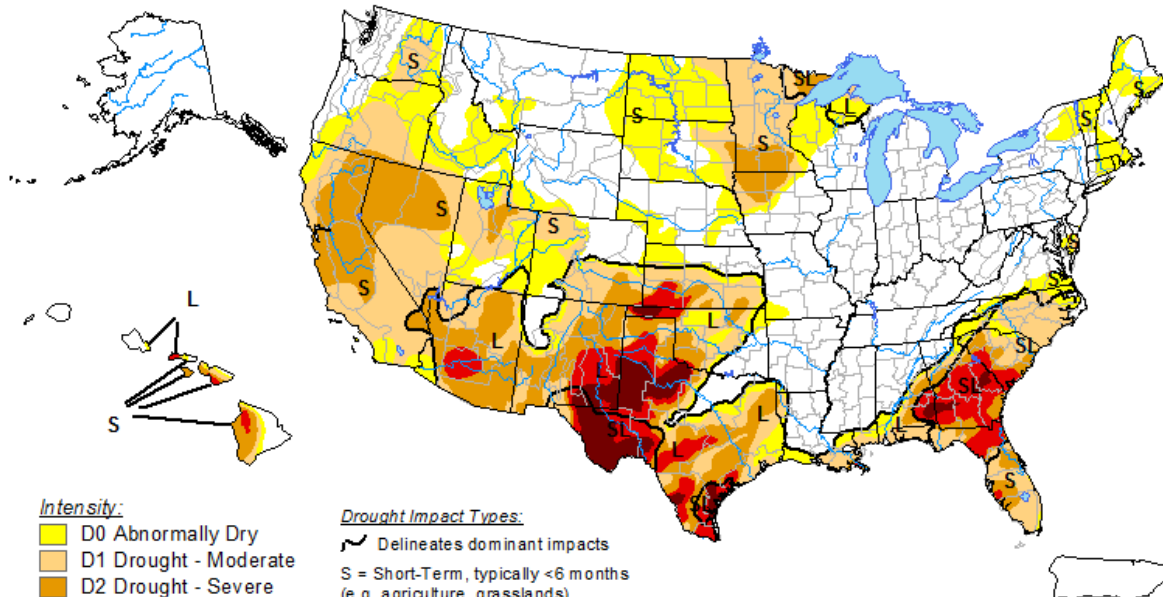
# National Drought Monitor

Issued March 13, 2012

## U.S. Drought Monitor

March 13, 2012

Valid 8 a.m. EDT



### Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional

### Drought Impact Types:

- Delineates dominant impacts
- S = Short-Term, typically <6 months  
(e.g. agriculture, grasslands)
- L = Long-Term, typically >6 months  
(e.g. h...)

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text for forecast statements.

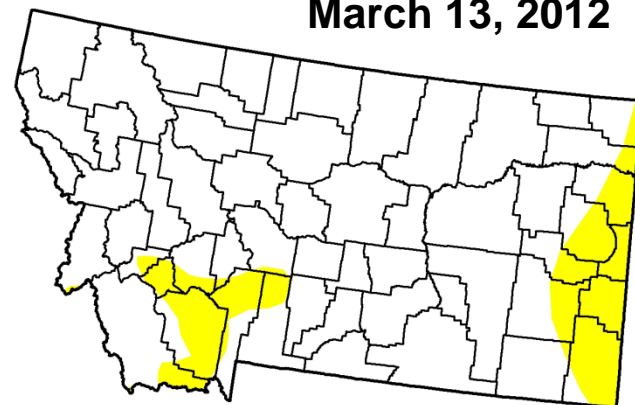
<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>

\* 'Abnormally Dry' in portions of southwest and eastern Montana

March 8, 2011



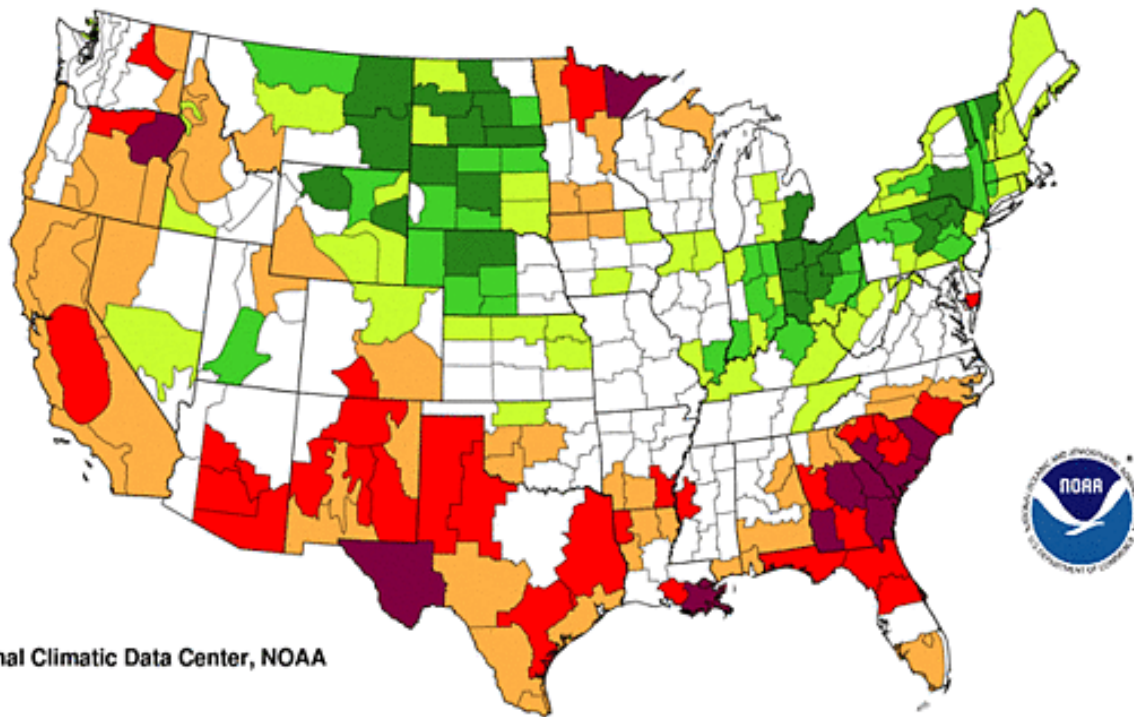
March 13, 2012





# Palmer Hydrological Drought Index

## February 2012

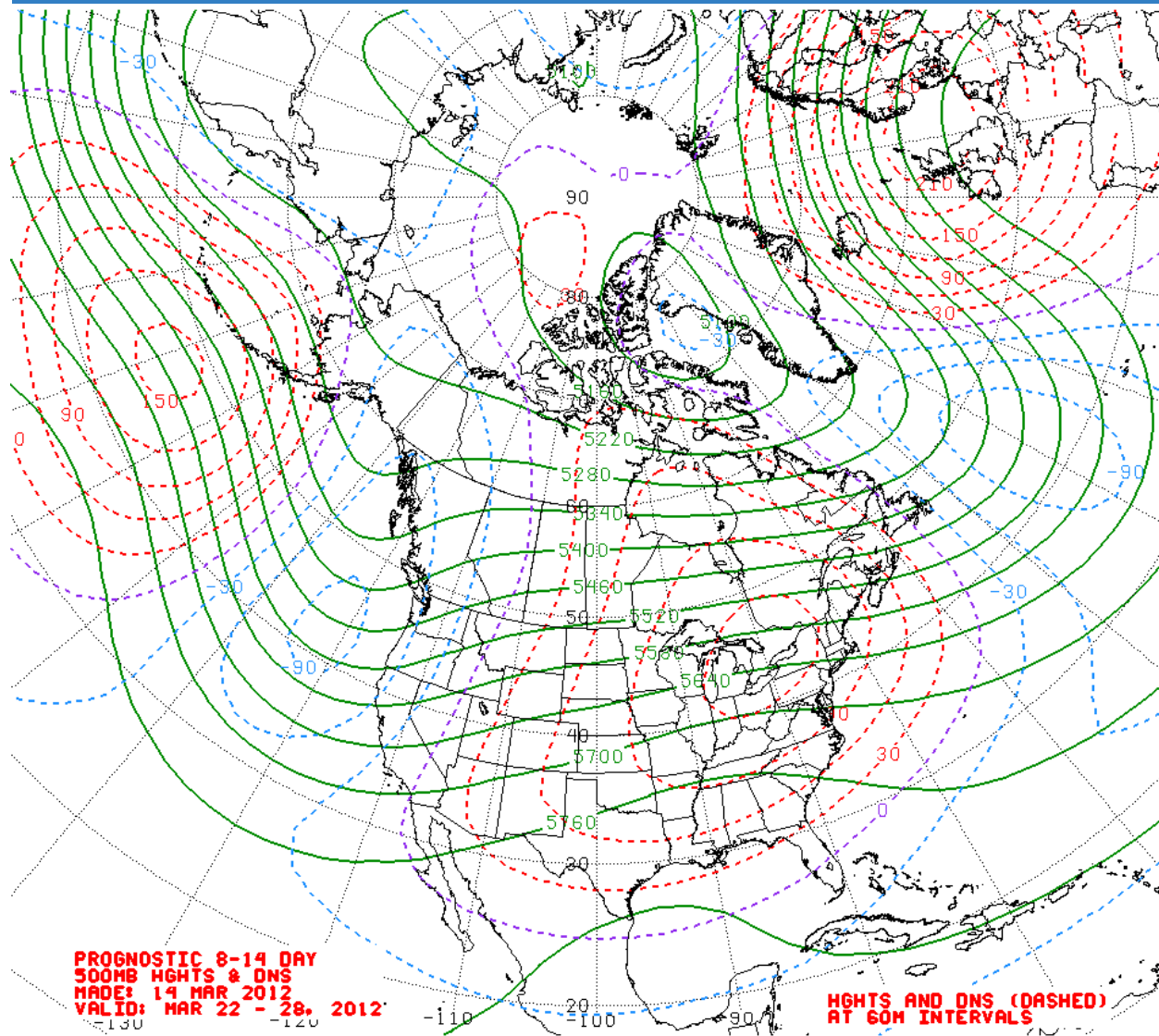


National Climatic Data Center, NOAA



- \* 'Extremely Moist'
  - \* Northeast
  - \* Southeast
- \* 'Very Moist'
  - \* North central
- \* 'Moderately Moist'
  - \* Central
- \* 'Mid-Range'
  - \* West
  - \* South central
- \* 'Moderate Drought'
  - \* Southwest

# 8 to 14 Day Outlook 500mb Heights and Anomalies



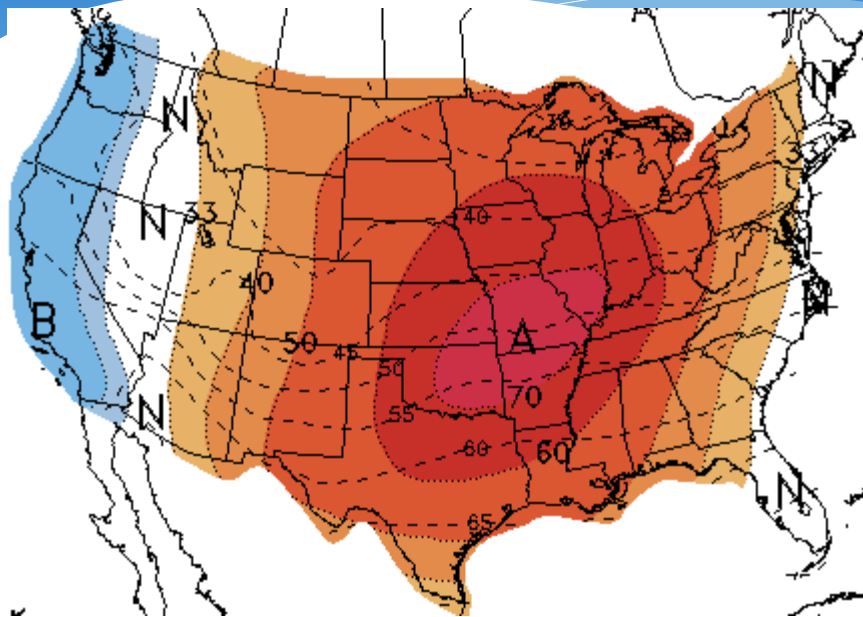
\* Southwesterly flow  
aloft into Montana



# 8 to 14 Day Outlook

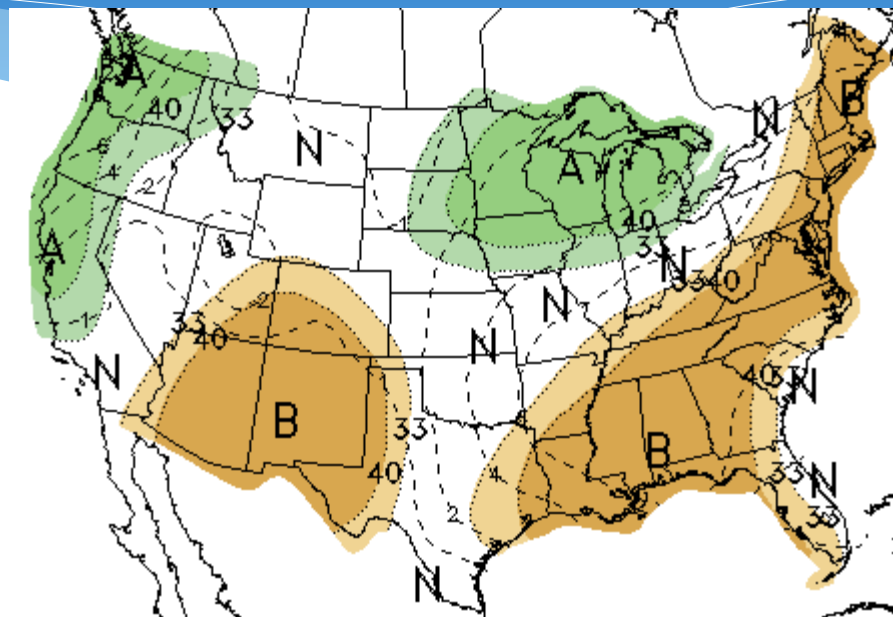
March 22 – 28, 2012

## Temperature

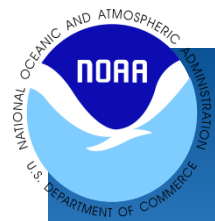


- \* 33% to 40% chance temperatures will be above normal over western half of Montana
- \* 40% to 50% chance temperatures will be above normal over eastern half

## Precipitation

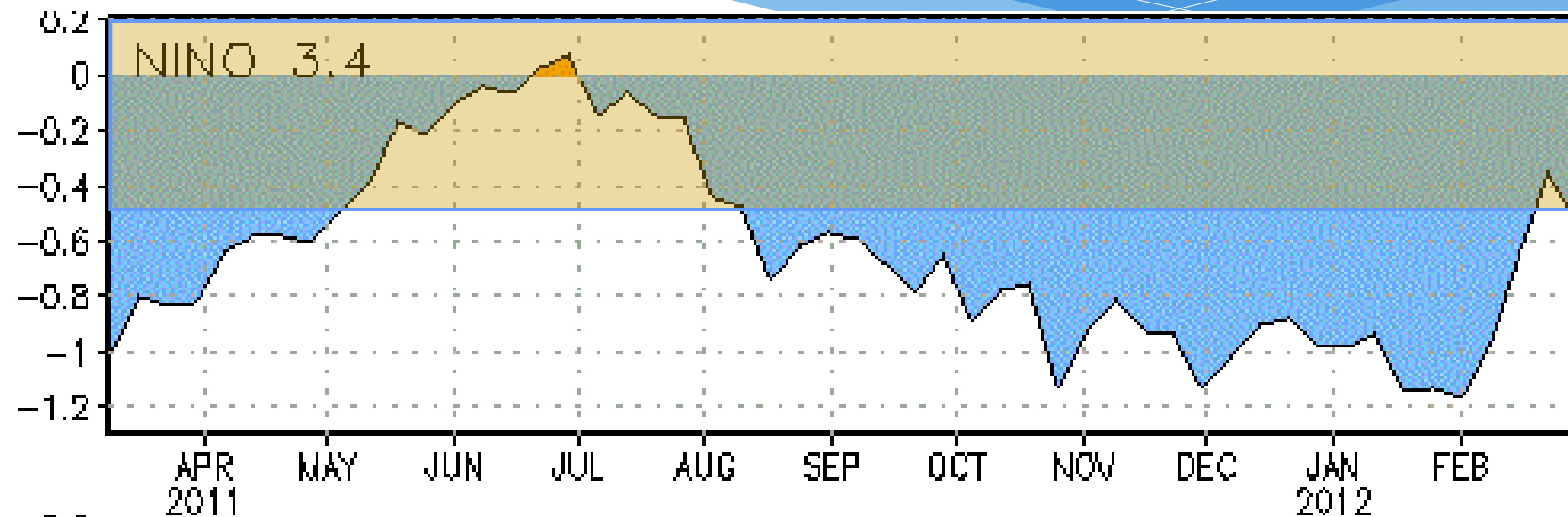


- \* 33% to 40% chance precipitation will be above normal over northwest corner
- \* Equal chances precipitation will be above, below or near normal remainder of Montana



# El Niño / La Niña

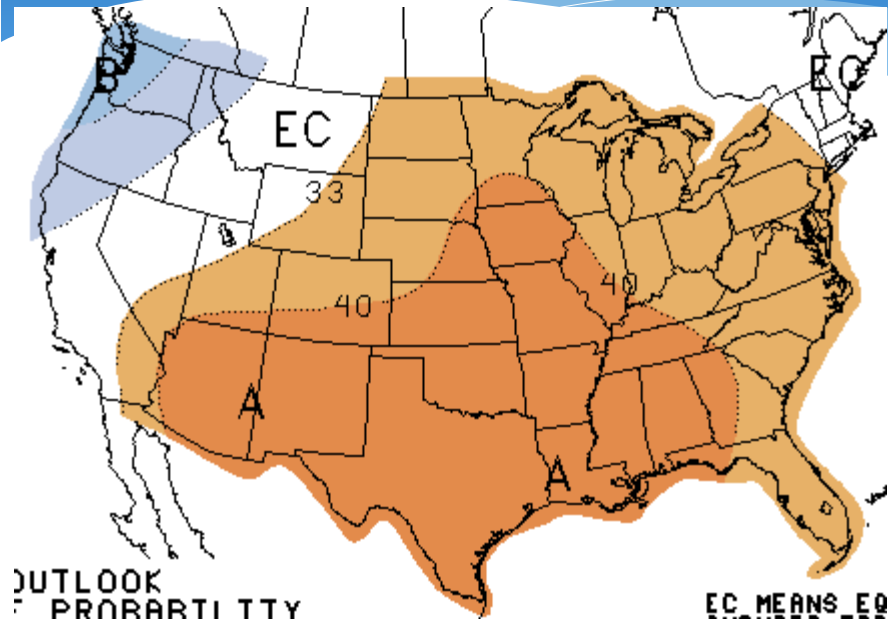
- La Niña is expected to transition to ENSO-neutral conditions by the end of April 2012.





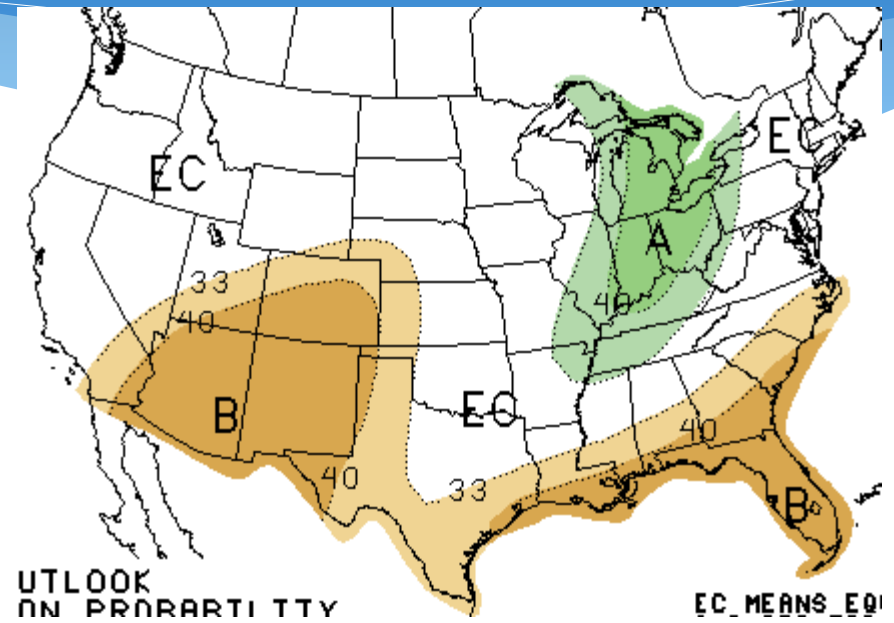
# April Outlook

## Temperature



- \* Equal chances temperatures will be above, below or near normal across Montana

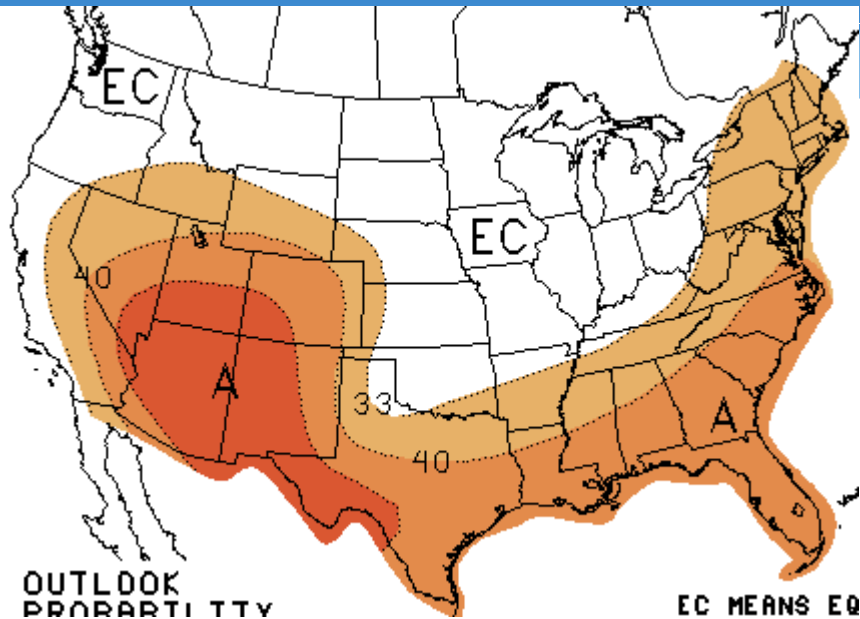
## Precipitation



- \* Equal chances precipitation will be above, below or near normal across Montana

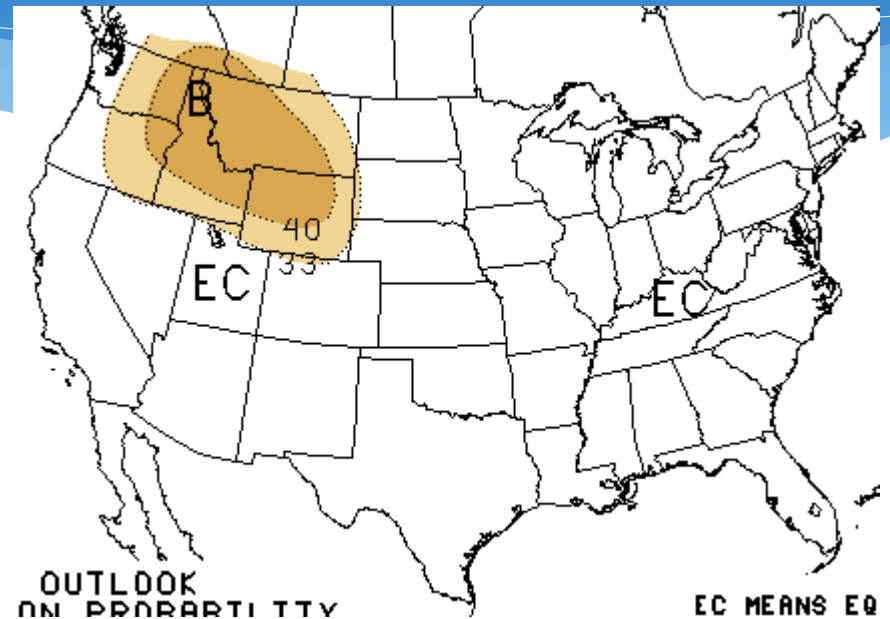
# May – July Outlook

## Temperature



- \* Equal chances temperatures will be above, below or near normal across Montana

## Precipitation



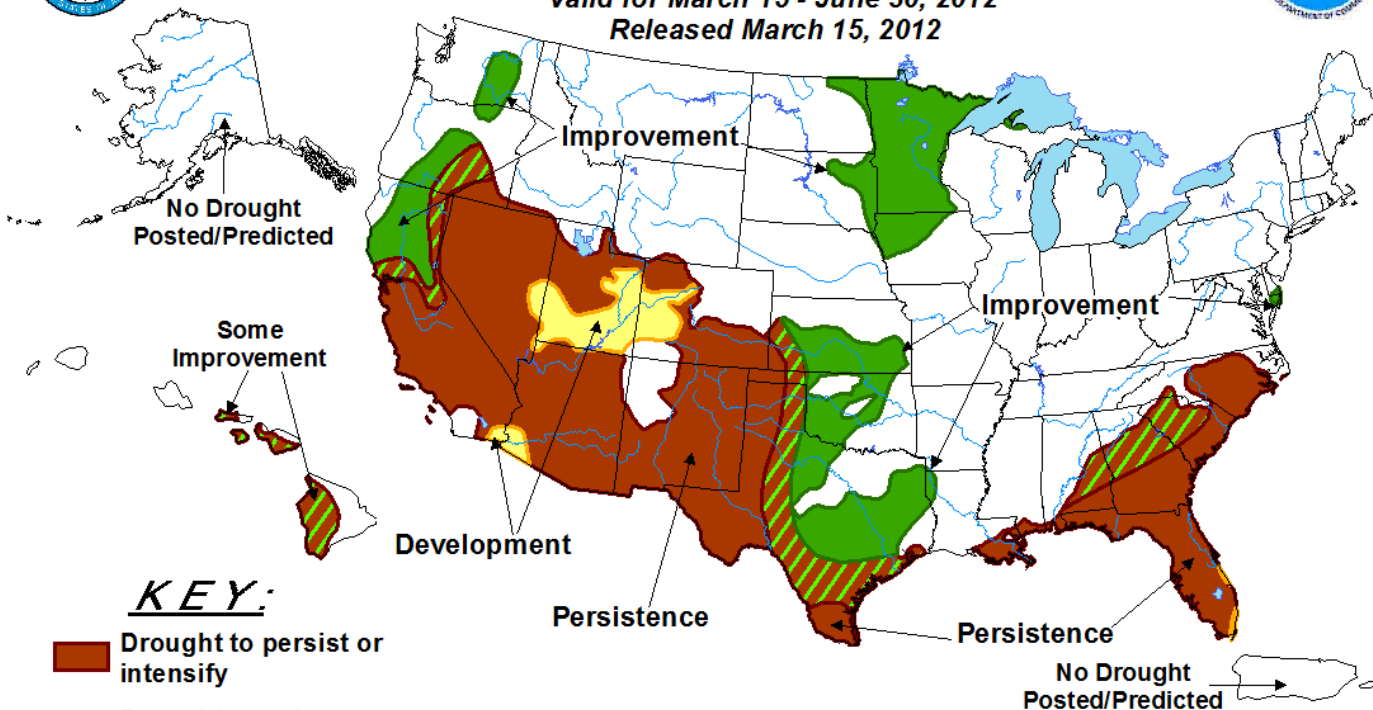
- \* 33% to 50% chance precipitation will be below normal across Montana

# Drought Outlook through June

## Issued March 15, 2012



### U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook Drought Tendency During the Valid Period Valid for March 15 - June 30, 2012 Released March 15, 2012



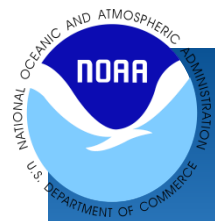
\* No drought development forecast for Montana through June

#### KEY:

- Drought to persist or intensify
- Drought ongoing, some improvement
- Drought likely to improve, impacts ease
- Drought development likely

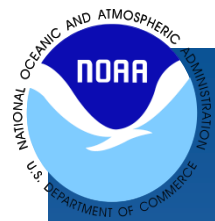
Depicts large-scale trends based on subjectively derived probabilities guided by short- and long-range statistical and dynamical forecasts. Short-term events -- such as individual storms -- cannot be accurately forecast more than a few days in advance. Use caution for applications -- such as crops -- that can be affected by such events. "Ongoing" drought areas are approximated from the Drought Monitor (D1 to D4 intensity). For weekly drought updates, see the latest U.S. Drought Monitor. NOTE: the green improvement areas imply at least a 1-category improvement in the Drought Monitor intensity levels, but do not necessarily imply drought elimination.





# In Summary...

- \* Montana has experienced above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation across much of the state through the 2011-2012 winter
- \* Chances for flooding this year are low
- \* Forecast calling for equal chances for above, below or near normal temperatures and precipitation through April
- \* Forecast calling for equal chances for above, below or near normal temperatures with better chances for below normal precipitation May through July



# weather.gov

[weather.gov/billings](http://weather.gov/billings)

[weather.gov/glasgow](http://weather.gov/glasgow)

[weather.gov/missoula](http://weather.gov/missoula)

[weather.gov/greatfalls](http://weather.gov/greatfalls)



KRTV Web Cam

March 13, 2012 4:30 p.m. – Wind W 46G60